



MAMLECHET HACHAI: LOST ANIMALS

YOU PROBABLY KNOW THAT THE TORAH TEACHES US TO BE VIGILANT—TO PAY CLOSE ATTENTION—ABOUT HELPING ANIMALS THAT MAY BE LOST.

- Have you ever seen a chipmunk or squirrel that was lost, or have you ever seen a robin or raven that was lost?
- What's the difference between them and a dog or cat, or between them and a cow or horse?
- The Torah doesn't require us to care for wild animals the same way we do for domesticated animals.
- Who can teach us what domesticated means? (Domesticated animals are those which people have bred and trained for human purposes, as pets or for work.)
- In very rare situations, one might care for a wild animal—like a small bird with a broken wing—although it's usually not a good idea to handle wild animals.

WHY DO YOU THINK IT MIGHT NOT BE A GOOD IDEA TO HANDLE A WILD ANIMAL?

- They may carry dangerous diseases, like rabies.
- They're not used to people and, when frightened, they may scratch or bite.

NOW, LET'S GO BACK TO TALKING ABOUT DOMESTICATED ANIMALS.

- Suppose you know a boy at your school who's an obnoxious bully—someone who has picked on you, even called you names because you're Jewish, and frightened you.
- One day you and your parents are driving down the road and you see the bully's dog walking along the side of the road, limping—but your parents don't have any idea who's dog it is.
- What do you think the Torah says is the right thing for *you* to do?

WHY DO YOU THINK THE TORAH TELLS US TO STOP AND HELP THE DOG AND RETURN IT TO ITS OWNER, EVEN THOUGH HE HAS TREATED US BADLY?

- Partly for the dog's sake, because the animal needs help.
- But partly also for the sake of our relations with one another as neighbors.
- The Torah teaches us to return even our enemy's animal, because in that way we turn enemies into friends—and we make the world a much better place for all of us to live.



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